



Nfld. & Labrador

Civil trial begins in cadet sexual assault case, nearly 50 years after alleged incidents



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A former air cadet from Newfoundland — whose identity is subject to a court-ordered publication ban — has sued the federal government over alleged sexual abuse at CFB Greenwood in the early 1970s. (CBC)

It's been seven years since he filed the lawsuit and almost five decades since the incidents are alleged to have taken place, but John Doe's case is finally being heard in court.

A civil trial began on Monday morning, with the man known as John Doe taking the stand to recount instances of alleged sexual assault starting in 1968.

- **Ex-cadet sues over alleged sexual abuse in N.S. in 1970s**

He said he had just joined the air cadets and was excited for a summer camp at CFB Greenwood in Nova Scotia. But something happened that changed his life forever.

"I woke up and he was coming out from under the sheets," John Doe testified.

His course leader at Greenwood was a man listed as "C.M." in court documents. C.M. was 21 years old at the time, and John Doe was 14.



CFB Greenwood is located in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley. (CBC)

The first allegation of sexual abuse was said to have occurred in Doe's bunk bed. He said C.M. crawled under his sheets while he was asleep and gave him nonconsensual oral sex.

He became distant after that and wanted to go home — but says C.M. cornered him in a bathroom and told him he had to stay. Doe says he felt pressured by his higher rank, and felt he had to respect his orders.

"He was a lieutenant. He was an officer ... I respected him [because] that was instilled in me from school on up."

When they went back to Newfoundland, Doe says C.M. became close to his family by befriending his sister. Doe said his father, who was also involved in cadets, was impressed by the 21-year-old officer and held him in high regard.

Some time in the year after the summer camp, C.M. took Doe on a road trip to New York. Doe testified there were several instances of forced oral sex along the way, and even more when they returned home to St. John's.

Eventual breakdown

Doe said he couldn't tell anyone what was happening, because sexual assault was not something people talked about back then.

He eventually got a steady job as a technician with the coast guard and met a woman and got married. They had two sons together.

But in the 1980s, his life became undone.

Ex-cadet from N.L. sues Ottawa over claims he was sexually abused at camp in N.S. in the 1970s 5:04

He was hearing news reports about the AIDS epidemic and became convinced he had the disease and had somehow passed it on to his children.

When the Mount Cashel scandal broke, he began spiralling again and was convinced someone was going to sexually assault his children if he wasn't there to protect them.

In 1989, with tensions at a peak, he refused to board a chopper and go to work. He felt the helicopter would crash if he got on board.

He was eventually relieved from his duties and was listed as unfit to work.

Three parties in court

While the allegations so far have been against C.M., it is the federal government that Doe is suing.

He is seeking compensation for damages stemming from the alleged abuse, saying the federal government did nothing to protect him and supervise the program at Greenwood.

None of the allegations have been tested in criminal court.

In its statement of defence, the government denied negligence and said if C.M. assaulted Doe, it was not his course of duties.



John Doe sits in Supreme Court before he testifying about alleged sexual assaults nearly 50 years ago. (Bruce Tilley/CBC)

Doe is being represented by lawyer Will Hiscock, while the federal government has two lawyers on its side. There is also a third party in the courtroom, however, as C.M. has hired Jerome Kennedy to represent him during the trial.

The government lawyers said they are also seeking a third-party indemnification against C.M. to hold him responsible for any damages that may be awarded.